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Russia to Miss CWC Deadline

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By Seth Brugger

Faced with the almost-certain prospect that Russia will miss a Chemical Weapons Convention deadline to destroy 1 percent of its "Category 1" chemical weapons by April 29, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the convention's implementing body, appears poised to grant Russia an extension of the deadline. Amid other international efforts to help Russia's troubled chemical demilitarization program, an April 3-7 meeting of the OPCW's Executive Council recommended extending the deadline for two years. The Conference of States Parties, scheduled to meet May 15-19, must approve that recommendation, which was requested by Russia in November 1999.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force April 29, 1997, requires all states-parties to destroy 1 percent of their Category 1 (the highest "risk" category) chemical weapons three years after the convention enters into force. States-parties must eliminate 20 percent of their Category 1 chemical weapons five years after entry into force, 45 percent of their Category 1 chemical weapons seven years after entry into force, and all Category 1 chemical weapons 10 years after entry into force. Once approved, the Executive Council's recommendation would, in essence, merge the first two deadlines for Russia. The Conference of States Parties may also modify the other intermediate deadlines and extend the final deadline by up to five years.

According to the OPCW, the other three states-parties declaring chemical weapons—India, South Korea, and the United States—have already met the first deadline, while Russia has not destroyed any of its almost 40,000 tons of chemical weapons. The United States has destroyed more than 15 percent of its Category 1 chemical weapons, according to James Bacon, the U.S. Army's program manager for chemical demilitarization.

Funding shortfalls have been largely responsible for delays in the Russian chemical demilitarization program. As reported by the Russian news agency Interfax, Colonel General Stanislav Petrov, head of Russia's radiation-, chemical-, and biological-defense forces, remarked April 17, "On the whole, we are about four years behind the plan. Russia is physically prepared to destroy all chemical weapons in the time set, but an insufficiency of financing changes the arrangement." An OPCW official, attributing Russian sources, said destroying the Russian stockpile would cost approximately \$11 billion.

To help alleviate the situation, Canada and Norway separately announced March 31 that they would make financial contributions to Russia's chemical demilitarization program, joining the European Union, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States as donors. According to a Canadian foreign ministry official, the Canadian contribution, made through the U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, totals roughly \$70,000. The amount of the Norwegian contribution remains undisclosed. Additionally, in accordance with a contract signed in 1996 under the auspices of the CTR program, a laboratory in Moscow was renovated at a cost of \$18.5 million to support Russian chemical demilitarization and opened at a ceremony April 5.

In addition to destroying chemical weapons stockpiles, the Chemical Weapons Convention also requires states-parties to destroy within 10 years, or convert to peaceful purposes within six years, their chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs). Russia has declared 24 CWPFs, three of which the OPCW has certified as destroyed, according to the OPCW official. The Executive Council has approved six requests for conversion, two of which the Conference of States Parties has approved. Russia has submitted an additional seven conversion requests, which the Executive Council has yet to consider. Russia can only cover 10 percent of the total costs for demilitarizing its CWPFs, the official said.

The convention was recently ratified by Kazakhstan on March 23, Colombia on April 5, and Malaysia on April 20. Yugoslavia acceded April 20. Once the convention enters into force for these countries, the Chemical Weapons Convention will stand at 135 states-parties.

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